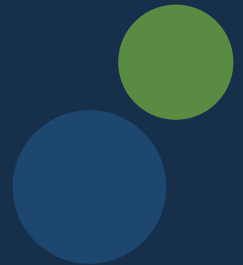




COMMUNICATE WITH CLARITY

FPPTA Communication Workshop

by Mariana Atencio



The Challenge

You are being asked to speak about a very specific issue:

The proposal to eliminate or sharply reduce property taxes in Florida — and what that could mean for local communities.

What people hear:

Lower taxes.
That's the simple part.

What they miss:

What property taxes help fund, what happens if that funding changes, and why this goes far beyond one tax bill.

That is where communication matters.

Workshop Purpose

Practical tools to help you communicate this issue:

- 1 Introduce yourself with credibility
- 2 Make your point clearly
- 3 Answer hard questions without losing control
- 4 Make the issue feel real
- 5 Deliver your message with calm and confidence

Not political. Not overly technical. Not overwhelming. Just clear.

Today's Roadmap



01

Power Intros

Build trust in one breath



02

Smart Brevity

Make your point in 60 seconds



03

Tough Questions

Stay calm, stay in control



04

Storytelling

Make the issue real



05

Delivery

Sound calm, clear, and credible

01

POWER INTROS

Build trust before you make your point.







Why Your Intro Matters

Before people agree, before they trust you, before they keep listening — they ask:

"Who is this person, and why should I listen?"

People may not immediately understand:

-  What FPPTA is
-  Why you are involved
-  Why your perspective matters
-  Why your voice belongs in this conversation

A weak intro makes people think:

"Why is this person talking to me?"

A strong intro makes people think:

"Okay, this person has a reason to be in this conversation."

The Power Intro Formula

NAME + TITLE

Your credibility.
Use your specific title,
not vague descriptions.

+

YOUR STORY

What makes your
perspective different.
One clear sentence.

+

IMPACT

Why this matters.
Why people should
care now.



"I'm Susan Miller, a pension trustee in Florida. I've seen how local funding supports things people use every day, like parks, libraries, and emergency services. That's why I think people deserve to know what could change in their communities."

Name + Title: Be Specific

The clearer your title is, the faster people understand why you belong in the conversation.

DON'T SAY

"I'm involved in this issue."



SAY THIS

"I'm a pension trustee in Florida."

"I work around this space."



"I work closely with public pension systems."

"I'm with FPPTA."



"I serve in the public pension space."

Not to sound impressive. To sound credible.

Your Story: One Clear Sentence

What have I seen that the average person may not see right away?

"I've seen how city funding helps pay for services people count on."

"I've seen what happens when cities have less money for everyday services."

"I've seen how a budget decision can show up later in libraries, parks, and public safety."

"I've seen how an idea that sounds simple can affect much more than one tax bill."

TOO VAGUE:

"I've seen how these decisions affect communities."

STRONGER:

"I've seen how these decisions affect the services people use every day."

Impact: Why Should I Care?

Tell people why your point matters now — not a brag, not corporate, just concrete.

WEAK: "That's why this conversation matters." (too soft)



"That's why people deserve the full picture before they make up their minds."



"That's why people should know what could change in their own communities."



"That's why this issue deserves more than just a slogan."



"That's why I want people to understand what may be lost if that funding changes."



"That's why I think people should ask what happens next, not just what sounds good now."

Weak vs. Strong Intros

WEAK

"Hi, I'm John, and I'm with FPPTA."

"Hi, I work in pensions."

"I serve in a fiduciary role overseeing retirement-related governance."

"I'm not really a spokesperson, but I just wanted to say..."

STRONG

"I'm John Smith, a pension trustee in Florida. I've seen how local funding supports services people use every day, and that's why people deserve to know what could change before they make up their minds."

"I'm Cathy Jones, and I work in the public pension space. I've seen how city budgets affect the systems communities rely on, and that's why I believe this issue deserves real clarity."

"I'm Sean McKinstry, and I work closely with local systems. I've seen how cuts on paper can turn into real changes for families and neighborhoods, and that's why people should pay attention to what is really at stake."

"I'm Peter O'Connell, a pension trustee in Florida. I've seen how much communities rely on stable local funding, and that's why I think people deserve more than just the headline."

Tailor Your Intro to the Audience



HOMEOWNERS

"I'm John Smith, a pension trustee in Florida. I've seen how local funding supports the services people use every day, and that's why homeowners deserve the full picture before they make up their minds."



SENIORS

"I'm Cathy Jones, and I work in the public pension space. I've seen how funding decisions affect the services people rely on most, and that's why I believe this issue deserves real clarity."



PARENTS

"I'm Sean McKinstry, and I work closely with local systems. I've seen how budget decisions can change daily community life, and that's why families should know what may be at stake."



MEDIA

"I'm Peter O'Connell, a pension trustee in Florida. I've seen how much communities rely on stable local funding, and that's why people need to understand what lies beneath a proposal that sounds simple on the surface."

Is Your Intro Strong Enough?

After your intro, the listener should understand:



Who you are



What your role is



What makes your perspective different



Why this matters



If your intro could apply to almost anyone in the room, it is too generic.

02

SMART BREVITY

Say what matters. Stop before you lose them.



The #1 Mistake Smart People Make

They know too much, so they say too much.

It comes from wanting to be accurate. It comes from wanting to be fair.
It comes from caring about the issue.

But if people have to work too hard to find your point, you lose them.

Four tools to fix this:

1

Start with your
verdict

2

The 60-second rule

3

The sequence
effect

4

The power of three

Tool 1: Start With Your Verdict

Do not warm up to your point. Start with it.

WEAK

"Well, there are different proposals being discussed, and there are a lot of questions about what may happen next, and of course this issue has many layers..."



"I'm concerned about eliminating or sharply reducing property taxes because people are hearing the promise of lower taxes, but not hearing enough about what those taxes help fund."



"My concern is that if property taxes change in a major way, people need to understand what that could mean for local services and communities."



"The biggest issue here is not just lower property taxes. It is what happens to the services and systems those taxes help support."

Tool 2: The 60-Second Rule

If it takes you three minutes to get to your point, you waited too long.

One minute is plenty — if you know your point:

A quick interview

A public comment

A community conversation

A short answer to a neighbor

A Facebook video

Q: "Why should regular people care about this?"



60-SECOND ANSWER

"People should care because property taxes help fund local services people use every day. If that funding changes in a big way, the question is what happens next. What changes? What gets cut? And what replaces that money? People deserve to understand that before they make up their minds."

Tool 3: The Sequence Effect

Tell people how many things you are about to say.

"This is a complicated issue and there are a lot of parts to it..."



"There are three things people should understand about property taxes."

Example in action:

1

First, Property taxes help fund local services people count on.

2

Second, People still have not gotten a clear answer on what replaces that money if it changes.

3

Third, People deserve to understand those tradeoffs before they make up their minds.

Trigger phrases: "There are two things people need to understand." | "Let me make three quick points." | "This matters for two reasons."

Tool 4: The Power of Three

People remember things better in threes. Three feels clear. Complete. Manageable.

Q: "What is the biggest concern here?"

- 1 *People hear the promise of lower property taxes more clearly than they hear what those taxes currently fund.*
- 2 *Many people still do not know what could change in their communities if that funding changes.*
- 3 *One of the biggest unanswered questions is what replaces that money.*

Q: "Why is FPPTA speaking about this?"

- 1 *This goes beyond one tax bill.*
- 2 *It affects the funding communities rely on.*
- 3 *Those changes can ripple far beyond what people see at first.*

03

TOUGH QUESTIONS

Stay calm. Stay clear. Stay in control.



The Bridge Technique



ACKNOWLEDGE

Show confidence, not agreement.

*"That's a fair question."
"I understand why people ask that."
"That's exactly the question people should be asking."
"I understand why that sounds appealing."*



BRIDGE

Redirect to your strongest ground.

*"What matters here is..."
"The bigger issue is..."
"The question I keep coming back to is..."
"What people need to understand is..."
"The real concern is..."*



ANSWER

Start with your verdict. Keep it short.

*Lead with your point.
Use structure.
Give two or three points at most.
Then stop.*

Example: Lower Property Taxes

Q: "Why shouldn't people want lower property taxes?"

WEAK

"Well, obviously it's more complicated than that, and there are all kinds of implications..."

STRONG

"I understand why that sounds appealing. What matters here is what those property taxes help fund. If that funding changes in a major way, people deserve to understand what could change in their communities too."

Q: "I'm sure there's a backup plan. The money has to come from somewhere."

WEAK

"Well, maybe, but we're not really sure..."

STRONG

"That's exactly the question people should be asking. What we still need is a clear answer on where that money would come from and what happens if it doesn't."

More Tough Question Examples

Q: "Why is FPPTA even involved in this?"

"Well, we're connected to a lot of issues that affect local governments and pensions..."

"That's a fair question. This issue goes beyond one tax bill. It affects local funding, and people close to public pension systems understand how those funding decisions can ripple outward."

Q: "Isn't this just political?"



"I understand why people may see it that way. What matters here is that people understand the full picture. This is about helping communities think through what property taxes fund and what could change if that funding changes."






Answering the Trust Question

Q: "Why should people trust what you're saying?"



"That's a fair question. My perspective comes from being close to the systems this affects. I've seen how local funding supports real services people count on, and that's why I think people deserve clear answers before major changes are made."

What Not to Do When Facing Hard Questions

-  Don't talk faster
-  Don't talk longer
-  Don't try to answer five things at once
-  Don't sound defensive
-  Don't match the other person's emotional tone

If the question is hard, your answer should get simpler, not longer.

How to Sound Calm Under Pressure

1

Pause before you answer

Even one second helps. It says: I'm grounded. I'm thinking. I'm not rattled.

2

Keep your voice steady

Do not speed up because the other person is emotional.

3

Answer the question you want to answer

Not just the way it was thrown at you.

4

Keep it shorter than your instinct tells you

When people get nervous, they almost always say too much.

Calm is power.

04

STORYTELLING

People remember what they can picture.



Replace Abstract With Concrete

When people cannot picture something, they usually do not feel it.

INSTEAD OF SAYING

"This could affect municipal services."



SAY THIS

"This could affect things people notice right away — police, fire rescue, libraries, parks, and basic neighborhood upkeep."

"There may be consequences for local budgets."



"The question is what happens when a city has less money for emergency services, parks, libraries, and everyday services people count on."

"This has downstream effects."



"What sounds simple at first can show up later in things people actually see: slower upkeep, fewer services, less support for community spaces."

Recipe: Real example + Real consequence + Clear point

Storytelling in Action

Q: "Why should regular people care about this?"

WEAK: "Because it affects municipal operations and long-term funding structures."

STRONG: "Because property taxes help support things people use and notice every day — police, fire rescue, libraries, parks, street cleanups, and other basic services. If that funding changes in a big way, the question is what happens to those things next."

More story-style answers:

"People hear 'lower property taxes' and think that sounds great. But what they may not think about is what those taxes help pay for now — fire rescue, police, libraries, parks. That is why people deserve to understand both sides."

"It is one thing to hear 'lower taxes.' It is another thing to think about what happens if a city has less money for emergency services, parks, libraries, or community programs. That is why this issue deserves more than a slogan."

Use Examples People Already Know

Talk about things people can instantly picture:



Police & fire rescue



Parks & community
centers



Libraries



Street cleanups & trash
pickup

Also: emergency response, after-school programs, recreation programs, visible upkeep of neighborhoods.



Don't try to tell too many stories.

One strong example is enough. Point first. Then one example people can picture. Then stop.

05

DELIVERY

Calm reads as confidence.



Pace & Pause

PACE

When people get nervous, they almost always speak too fast.

Speed usually makes you sound less confident, not more.

If you speak too fast, people do not hear confidence. They hear tension.

Rule: If the issue is important, do not rush it.

PAUSE

A short pause does three things:

1. It makes you sound thoughtful.
2. It gives you control.
3. It gives the audience a second to absorb what you just said.

That pause says: I'm grounded. I'm thinking. I'm not rattled.

**The pause is not empty.
The pause is authority.**

Voice, Hands & Presence

VOICE

Sound steady, grounded, and intentional.

Let certain words carry weight.

Do not let sentences drift upward like a question.

Land the sentence. Finish the thought.

HANDS

Gesture when it helps meaning. Then let your hands rest.

Count with your fingers when listing.

No fidgeting. No repeated clasping. No random motion.

Stillness reads as confidence.

PRESENCE

Presence is about looking like you mean what you are saying.

Steady pace. Calm voice. Clean pauses. Grounded posture.

Not about being loud or dramatic.

Not about pretending to be someone you're not.

If you are nervous: Slow down. Pause before you answer. Let key lines land. Keep your voice steady. Use your hands with purpose. Do not rush to fill silence.

You don't need to sound perfect.

You need to sound clear, grounded, and credible.



Because you are not just explaining a policy idea.
You are helping people understand what may change
in the places where they live.

Clarity is not extra. Clarity is the work.

